

What are the dangers of lead?

Lead is a highly toxic metal. Too much lead in the body, or lead poisoning, can cause serious and permanent health problems for anyone, but children and pregnant women are at special risk. The Health Department recommends testing all children at ages 1 and 2. Talk to your health care provider about testing.

Where does lead come from?

In 1978, lead was banned in house paint. About 70% of Vermont homes were built before 1978 and likely contain lead-based paint. Children, pregnant women and adults can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or whenever lead paint is improperly sanded, scraped or burned.

Over time, lead paint on surfaces crumbles into invisible dust that contaminates homes and soil. Dust or soil clings to hands, toys, and objects that children put in their mouths. Young children are at highest risk because their developing bodies absorb lead more easily. Children can also be exposed to lead by eating, chewing or sucking on lead-painted objects such as windowsills or furniture.

Children, pregnant women, and adults can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or whenever lead-based paint is improperly sanded, scraped, or burned. There are two primary ways lead exposure can occur from these activities. One is from breathing in lead dust. The other is from swallowing the lead dust if it gets onto hands and then into mouths.

This commonly occurs through eating, drinking, or smoking.

What is the Vermont Lead Law?

The Vermont Lead Law – passed in 1996 and updated in 2008 – requires landlords of older buildings and child care facility owners to help prevent children from being exposed to lead. If a residential rental property or child care facility was built before 1978, the owner of the property or the property management company is required to:

- Provide tenants with “Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home” booklet (available on healthvermont.gov)
- Post an approved notice asking people to report chipping or damaged paint (available on healthvermont.gov)
- Attend a training program approved by the Health Department and or ensure that anyone who performs Essential Maintenance Practices on the property has completed the training program
- Complete Essential Maintenance Practices annually
- Sign a compliance statement certifying that Essential Maintenance Practices have been done and provide a copy to their tenants, insurance carrier and the Health Department at least every 365 days

What are Essential Maintenance Practices?

Essential Maintenance Practices, which must be completed annually, include:

- Inspecting the property inside and outside

- Identifying areas where paint is in poor condition and promptly fixing it in a lead-safe way
- Verifying the installation of low-cost inserts in window wells in all wooden windows
- Removing any visible paint chips on the ground outside the building
- Performing a specialized cleaning in common areas
- Taking precautions when remodeling to prevent the spread of lead dust

What are safe work practices under the Lead Law?

The Lead Law (18 VSA Chapter 38) prohibits unsafe work practices that increase the risk of lead exposure, including removing lead-based paint by burning, using a heat gun, water or sand blasting, dry scraping, power sanding, and chemical stripping.

The law requires using lead-safe work practices including limiting access to work areas, using plastic dust barriers, wearing protective clothing, and using water to dampen painted surfaces or debris before disturbing them.

What are the Lead Law's benefits?

Protects children: Simple ongoing maintenance practices prevent children from being exposed to lead.

Protects property owners: Property owners who follow the law receive increased liability protection.

Protects workers: Using lead-safe work practices reduces workers' exposure to lead.

Saves money: By reducing children's exposure to lead, property owners may avoid the high cost of abatement that could be required in the case of a lead-poisoned child.

What will I learn in an Essential Maintenance Practices class?

The Essential Maintenance Practices class is offered around the state by trained instructors. The class, which is four hours long and usually free, helps participants to:

- Comply with the Vermont Lead Law
- Understand the health effects of lead exposure
- Learn ways to protect children from exposure to lead
- Know how to perform Essential Maintenance Practices safely
- Identify work practices that increase the risk of lead poisoning

A schedule of classes is online at leadsafevermont.org. For a full description of the Lead Law requirements, visit legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/18/038.

To file or search for a compliance statement on a property, visit secure.vermont.gov/VDH/emp.

For more information, call the Health Department at (802) 865-7786 or (800) 439-8550, or visit healthvermont.gov.

You can also contact the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board at www.vhcb.org/Lead-Paint or (802) 828-5064 or (800) 290-0527.